

**RIO GRANDE ZOO, ALBUQUERQUE AQUARIUM and
RIO GRANDE BOTANIC GARDEN**

**BIOPARK EDUCATION VOLUNTEER TEACHER
JOB DESCRIPTION 2006**



The mission of Albuquerque Biological Park (BioPark) Education is to teach about the diversity and interdependence of life and inspire stewardship for the earth. Volunteer teachers, called docents, enable the BioPark to fulfill its education mission.

Docents utilize the Albuquerque Aquarium, Rio Grande Botanic Garden, Rio Grande Zoo and Tingley Beach as a teaching resource by focusing on all the habitats represented and species exhibited. Docents are critical to the mission because they bring a knowledgeable and personal connection to thousands of people each year, both on-grounds and through outreach.

**GENERAL
REQUIREMENTS**

Anyone over 18 years old is eligible. Skills needed include enthusiasm, a commitment to teaching conservation, a sense of responsibility, and patience. The knowledge required is taught. As a safety precaution, all volunteers are required to submit to a City of Albuquerque security check before they can begin volunteering.

**MINIMUM
TIME**

Volunteers choose when they want to work during the week or on weekends. The facilities are open 9:00am - 5:00pm, seven days a week, year-round. A regular weekly schedule is encouraged, but not required.

For docents, a minimum total of 60 volunteer hours annually is required. At least 24 hours of these must be spent directly teaching the public; the remaining 36 hours may also be spent directly teaching the public or doing support work such as research, writing, attending monthly meetings, continuing education classes and Brown Bags, assisting with general BioPark projects, etc.

Volunteers are responsible for tracking their own hours on an honor system. If interested, volunteers are encouraged to train and volunteer at more than one BioPark facility.

TRAINING

Docent training takes place in two phases on Saturdays in 2006. Phase I is ten Saturday from August 12 through December 2. Most training days are 9:30am - 3:30pm. Phase II is on two Saturdays in January. Phase I topics are taught by animal and plant staff and cover such subjects as habitats, ecology and conservation, basic biological concepts, and natural history of the species on exhibit at each facility. During Phase I, trainees will work on-grounds with experienced docents to practice what they have learned. Three of the ten Saturdays are designed for individual study teams to work together doing observations, research, and a group project (on these days, trainees are "on their own"; staff and experienced docents don't facilitate).

TRAINING (cont'd) Phase II topics cover such subjects as teaching strategies, how to use biofacts, and logistics of volunteering at the BioPark. In order to be an effective docent, the information taught in the training must be learned. A final exam is administered and must be passed (if necessary, it can be retaken). There are many ways to assist trainees with learning. If requested, staff or experienced docents can offer coaching. Please bring your lunch on training days to give you enough time to eat, and come prepared for indoor and outdoor learning. Wear comfortable walking shoes.

DUTIES

Docents perform a variety of duties, depending on personal interest. Examples of BioPark-wide duties are listed below, followed by facility-specific duties. Ideas for other duties are welcome; however, you must be willing to help implement them! Duties are available 7 days/week unless otherwise noted.

All BioPark docents can:

- Offer BioPark visitors the chance to experience for themselves the wonder of animals and plants through on-grounds Discovery Stations. Discovery Stations consist of a volunteer stationed by an exhibit using biofacts to engage visitors in a dialogue. Depending on the facility, biofacts may include items such as education animals, animal pelts, shark skin, urchin spines, tree rings or dried roots. Through the sense of touch and guided by conversation, visitors are encouraged to discover conservation concepts for themselves.

Examples of some Discovery Station topics are Endangered Species, Polar Bears, Butterflies, Desert Life, Sharks and Sea Turtles.

- Interpret the BioPark for visitors through structured guided tours or informal mini-tours. Guided tours are offered to organized groups such as schools, churches, and community clubs and must be scheduled in advance. Mini-tours are not scheduled in advance and consist of a volunteer teacher guiding visitors through a series of their favorite exhibits.
- Bring the wonders of the BioPark to local classrooms and organizations. Teaching tools may include aquatic invertebrates, prickly cacti and colorful birds. BioPark Outreach programs are conducted for children and adults.
- Take additional training classes (offered seasonally) to become a Tingley Docent. Tingley Docents teach about local flora and fauna found in Albuquerque's bosque and New Mexico's wetlands. They may participate in fishing clinics, night time guided tours and children's classes.

DUTIES (cont'd)

Sample duties specific to the Rio Grande Zoo include:

- Travel around New Mexico on a zoomobile teaching about animals and conservation. The Zoo To You van goes on the road for four weekdays at a time and is staffed by two volunteers. Phelps Dodge Mining Company provides funds for its operation and on-the-road expenses. The Zoo To You van visits any community in New Mexico that requests it, no matter how small and is free of charge. Site visits include schools, senior citizen homes, libraries and county fairs. Hour-long presentations, consisting of slides, education animals and biofacts, are made to groups. Training for new docents on the Zoo To You van will be in January 2007.
- Introduce Albuquerque-area school children to the animal kingdom using local Zoo To You biofacts, education animals and slides. Volunteers present the slide program, developed for kindergarten through 8th grade and then bring the concepts to life by allowing the children to see zoo biofacts up-close and interact with the education animals brought into the classroom. Adult outreach programs are also available.
- Enable zoo visitors to touch an alpaca or llama. Alpacas and llamas are walked around the zoo park regularly. Other education demonstration animals include African crested porcupine, serval, prehensile-tailed porcupine and macaw. A variety of other birds and small mammals are available for on-grounds Discovery Stations.

Sample duties specific to the Albuquerque Aquarium include:

- Teach about tidepool inhabitants at the Touchpool in the aquarium. Invertebrates are available for supervised touching by visitors when a volunteer is available to explain the animal's natural history. A mini-touchpool travels as part of aquarium outreach programs.
- Assist visitors with identification of marine life, including animals found in coral reef and deep ocean tanks, pointing out similarities and differences between species.
- Teach visitors about the natural history of aquatic environments (Rio Grande, Gulf of Mexico, Coral Reef and Atlantic Ocean) and their connection and importance to us in the desert. Provide examples to visitors about the importance of animals (i.e., sharks, sea turtles) in the ecosystems of the ocean.
- Teach visitors about animals in the ocean tank during daily feedings. Narrate the process by which divers feed the aquarium animals while explaining the natural history of eels, stingrays, porcupine fish and more!

Sample duties specific to the Rio Grande Botanic Garden include:

- Teach in the Desert and Mediterranean Conservatories. Explain the adaptations of plants that grow in these arid climates and teach about the characteristics and fragility of these unique habitats.

DUTIES (cont'd)

- Highlight specific plants. Docents with in-depth knowledge about roses, cacti, or other plants represented at the garden will be encouraged to share their expertise with interested visitors at the appropriate exhibit.
- Involve visitors in hands-on gardening experiences. Choose your own topic or use seed strips, mystery seed kits and seed balls, let children carefully handle earthworms, or explain differences between fruits and veggies.
- Highlight water. Refer to the critical necessity of water desert climates and show examples of efficient water use and conservation at the Botanic Garden. Provide visitors with tips for conserving water at home. Help visitors explore the pond – from waterfowl and frogs to microscopic creatures found in a drop of water.
- Connect visitors to land by taking them back in time to the 1920's/30 era Heritage Farm exhibit. Demonstrate wool working, canning and cooking techniques. Talk with visitors about traditional crops and farm animals.

SUPPORT

Resources exist throughout the BioPark to help volunteers fulfill their duties. Experienced docents are eager to help new volunteers and are enthusiastic about sharing their own knowledge. Education staff can provide assistance, and small Education Libraries are available. Monthly education meetings are generally held on the first Thursday and first Saturday of each month, and new volunteers are encouraged to attend beginning in September (Sept. 7 and 9). The Zoo education meetings are at 9:00am in the Zoo Education Barn and the Aquarium/Botanic Garden (AQ/BG) meetings are at 11:00am in the AQ/BG education building. Current BioPark happenings are discussed as well as facility-specific information.

Mid-month, a written update is mailed to all BioPark volunteers. Another support resource for trainees is the docent mentor team. The mentors are available to you to answer questions, show you around the BioPark, take you along as they teach so you can observe volunteers “in action,” and offer general guidance throughout your training.

TANGIBLE BENEFITS

Volunteers have the opportunity to do meaningful and gratifying education work with thousands of visitors to the BioPark, an important intangible benefit. Tangible benefits are also available. Upon completion of the training and a commitment to give the minimum number of hours annually to the BioPark, volunteers are given an identification badge, which allows access to all BioPark facilities (zoo, aquarium, botanic garden) in lieu of regular admission. While on duty, volunteers receive a discount at the food and gift concession stands. At the end of each calendar year, volunteers are awarded annual recognition items to wear on their vest (see uniform section below). Volunteers are offered discounts to all fee-based BioPark Education programs, and are invited to special volunteer-only events.

UNIFORM

Docents wear a printed fabric vest worn with the uniform colors. It is the responsibility of the docent to buy the vest fabric from BioPark Education and get the vest made on your own.

The identification badge and nametag provided at graduation are part of the uniform. Uniform colors are black, brown, beige, or white. It is the responsibility of the volunteer to acquire the solid-colored blouse/shirt/pants/shorts/skirt in the uniform colors. (Blue jeans/denim are not appropriate.)

COSTS

Docent out-of-pocket expenses are phased in over the course of training and include a training manual, group project, guidebook, and uniform vest costs (as well as a key deposit at the zoo). At the beginning of training, docents are responsible for buying the training manual (\$20.00); during training, docents are responsible for any costs associated with the group project (\$0 - \$10); and at the end of training, docents are responsible for buying a guidebook which gives species information (\$15.00). Docents are responsible for acquiring their own vest uniform (material cost is \$12/yards). Zoo docents need to put a refundable deposit down for the key to the Zoo Education Barn (\$10.00). The deposit for the key will be refunded when the zoo docent resigns and the key is returned.

STRUCTURE

Zoo docents report to the Zoo Education Coordinator, Allyson Wallace, Aquarium docents report to the Aquarium Education Coordinator, Dave Karrmann and Botanic Garden docents report to Botanic Garden Education Coordinator, Amy Henderson. Allyson, Dave and Amy report to the BioPark Education Curator, Bill Aragon. The Education staff works very closely with the Zoo, Aquarium, and Botanic Garden staff.

PERTINENT DATES

A general orientation will be Saturday, August 5, at 11:00am in the Colores Building at the Rio Grande Zoo. The purpose of the orientation is to describe all volunteer teaching programs and other volunteer opportunities, at no obligation to the attendee. The orientation will last approximately one hour.

The specific dates for training for each facility are listed below. The schedule does accommodate people interested in training at more than one facility and this will be explained at the orientation.

Zoo Phase I: August 12; September 9 (1/2 day), 23, 30; October 14, 21; November 4, 11, 18; December 2.

Zoo Phase II: January 13, 20

Aquarium Phase I: August 12, 19; September 9, 16, 30; October 7, 21, 28; November 18; December 2.

Aquarium Phase II: January 13, 20

Botanic Garden Phase I: August 12, 26; September 16, 23; October 7, 14, 28; November 4, 18, December 2.

Botanic Garden Phase II: January 13, 20

NEXT STEP

If you want to become a volunteer teacher, you have several options:

- Mail the attached BioPark Education Application Form and Volunteer Contract/Release to BioPark Education, 903 10th Street SW, 87102, or
- Bring the paperwork to the BioPark volunteer orientation on Saturday, August 5, 2006, at 11:00am, in the Colores building at the zoo. Tell the zoo cashier you are here for the volunteer orientation to gain admittance.
- You can also just come to the *first day* of training on August 12. Either bring the completed job description with you or be prepared to fill it out that day.

If you are not *certain* that you would like to become a volunteer, but are *interested*, please attend the orientation at no obligation to find out more and learn about other options.

CONTACT

For more information, call BioPark Education, 764-6245.
(NM Voice/Relay or 711) or visit www.cabq.gov/biopark.



The BioPark is a division of the City of Albuquerque's
Cultural Services Department

APPLICATION FORM
BioPark Volunteer Teacher
2006

Today's Date: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

e mail: _____ Are you over 18 years old? _____

Home Phone: _____ Work Phone (if applicable): _____

Occupation: _____

Are you currently employed? _____ If so, where? _____

If you have an emergency while at the BioPark, whom should we call (name, phone number)?

In which position are you interested?

_____ Rio Grande Zoo Docent _____ Albuquerque Aquarium Docent _____ Botanic Garden
Docent

How did you hear about this job? (Called within the last year to inquire, saw notice in newspaper, from a friend, saw the flier, etc.)

What do you hope to gain from working here? Knowing your expectations will help us make your experience more rewarding.

The following information will help us learn more about your interests. Please fill it in if you feel it is appropriate, or if you have skills you'd be willing to share.

Education background: _____

Hobbies/Special Expertise/Relevant Experience: _____

Other volunteer organizations of which you are an active member:

Special skills you are willing to share (fluency in a second language, writing, drawing, office work,

photography, data entry in a computer, experience with computers, graphics, etc.)

**BIOPARK VOLUNTEER TEACHER
VOLUNTEER CONTRACT/RELEASE**

I have read the BioPark Volunteer Teacher job description, and understand the responsibilities of becoming an Albuquerque Biological Park volunteer. I am willing to enter into an agreement with the City of Albuquerque, Albuquerque Biological Park, and commit to donating the minimum number of hours required to the BioPark. In return, I will be provided classroom and on-the-job training and free access to BioPark facilities while I am an active volunteer.

I understand that handling BioPark animals, which are unpredictable in their behavior, could result in injury. I agree that I shall be responsible for any injuries or damage incurred by me while performing volunteer services at the Albuquerque Biological Park. The City will, however, be responsible if I am injured and the injury is caused by the sole negligence of the City or its employees. I agree that I will consult with my physician and insure that any inoculations recommended are maintained in a current status. I agree to keep current on my tetanus shot (as recommended every 5 years).

I understand that the City will hold me responsible for any damage to property of the City or property belonging to third parties if the damage is caused by my negligent conduct. Likewise, I understand that the City will hold me responsible for all injuries sustained by persons when the injury is caused by negligent conduct. I understand and agree that I shall be expected to pay for damages or injuries caused by my negligence.

I understand that this volunteer contract may be terminated at any time by either myself or the Albuquerque Biological Park without cause. In such event, any programs and educational materials that I have developed will remain the property of the Albuquerque Biological Park.

ALBUQUERQUE BIOPARK VOLUNTEER TEACHER

Printed Name

Address

City

State

Zip

Signature

Date

Mail application, contract/release and background check forms to:

Albuquerque BioPark Education

Cathy Wylie

903 10th Street SW

Albuquerque NM 87102

OFFICE USE: NMSO PASS / NO PASS _____ Date _____ Initials
APD Form _____ ID _____ _____ City Hall